A

WORD OF ADVICE

TO THE

CHRISTIAN PROFESSOR.

Dearly beloved in the Lord,

WHEN, with ſerioufneſs and attention, we take a ſurvey of the preſent ſtate the church in general, we muſt confeſs it to e in a moſt pitiable condition indeed; and at not ſo much from an expectation of an approach by her diſtant foes, as from thoſe individuals who compoſe her own body. From hence will naturally be expedient, that a ſtrict inuiry be made, in order that the iniquitous may e found out, and humbled under a ſenſe of uilt before him who pardoneth iniquity, tranſreſſion and ſin; and who alone, by his power nd love, can reſtore to the church proſperity nd peace. But, on a review of the exceeding eceitfulneſs of ſin, it is abſolutely impoſſible

for

for any man (however exalted in the church), by his own wiſdom, to diſcover the deficiency, unleſs God makes it manifeſt by the effectual operation of his heavenly grace.

As, I truſt, the Lord hath for ſome time paſt greatly affected my ſoul with a ſight and ſenſe of one of thoſe grand deficiencies which unhappily are found in the church, together with its awful conſequences; I cannot, I dare not but make it manifeſt to my fellow-ſinners, in order that they may turn again unto the Lord their God. And, for this purpoſe, may Chriſt, the friend, defender, and king of his church, pour of his holy Spirit into the reader's ſoul and mine, that with full purpoſe of heart we may cleave unto him, to the glory of his precious name!

Now, the deficiency ſeems to lie here: The children of God have copied after Iſrael of old; they have forſaken Chriſt, the only fountain of living water, and hewn unto themſelves broken ciſterns that can hold no water; and though there be not a general revolt from a *profeſſion* of being God's people, yet there is a ſecret revolt in heart, which certainly is the moſt awful. In ſhort, there ſeems to be a ſecret *looking* to, and truſting in, ſomething ſhort of an humble de-

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pendence on, and receiving from, that inexhauſtible fulneſs which God in covenant love hath treaſured up in his dear Son, to be conveyed to the ſouls of his people by the agency of the Holy Ghoſt, as the *only* means whereby they can live and walk with God, who is the portion of his ſaints, and will, in conſequence thereof, produce thoſe celeſtial fruits which manifeſt them to be the children of the Moſt High, and bring glory and honour to his holy name.

This cenſure perhaps may appear at firſt too ſevere; but, reader, it will be well for you and I, if, by living upon and obeying our Jeſus, we find no need thereof. But, whoever you are, whether living upon Chriſt, or your profeſſion only, you will excuſe, if not be thankful for, a friendly jog, in this ſleepy ſeaſon. May God therefore ſhine into your heart, and bring you to rejoice in Jeſus!

I proceed now to give you the reaſons for what I have aſſerted; and theſe, I believe, you may gather from the following obſervations.

1. When the man loſes ſight of Chriſt, and, by ſo doing, ceaſes to receive ſupplies of grace from him, he immediately ſinks into lukewarmneſs and formality, if he does not even deviate into

into the deſtructive paths of ſcandalous ſin. Hence, notwithſtanding he may attend upon public ordinances, he quits them with his heart more ſatisfied with a bare profeſſion, and leſs moulded into the ſweet image of Jeſus. This is manifeſted by his conduct at home; for, inſtead of retiring to his cloſet, to hold communion with God, through the blood of the atonement, and imploring a bleſſing out of the fulneſs of Jeſus, for the ſanctifying of the ſabbath; or reading and praying with his family; inſtead of this, his lips are uttering thoſe vain and fooliſh things which are entirely inconſiſtent with what he profeſſes: and, above all, he pleaſes himſelf with the idea of his being a real Chriſtian, either becauſe he is a member of the goſpel church, or a conſtant attender on the ſervice of the ſanctuary. O how unbecomingly does this man live! Reader, is this thy caſe? How unworthy is ſuch a perſon of a name or place in the houſe of God! or of the Chriſtian character! A practice like this not only ſinks the careleſs profeſſor's own heart into ſin and ſloth, but when a worldling is caſt into his company, he conſiders, by this man's conduct, religion rather as a Sunday amuſement, than as worſhipping a covenant God in Jeſus Chriſt.—Thus the man of the world lulls himſelf into a falſe ſecurity amidſt his vanity and folly, or

perhaps

perhaps at length becomes a ſcoffer at the religion, and a blaſphemer of the name of Jeſus. But,

2. Another evidence of a man's not looking to, and receiving from Chriſt, is, a reliance on his own wiſdom. Now, reader, though you may probably deteſt this character, as inconſiſtent with your profeſſion, nevertheleſs, through the deceitfulneſs of ſin, it may be your own. The matter is, do you daily renounce your own wiſdom, and come to Chriſt, who is made wiſdom unto his people? If you do not, pray conſider the awful conſequences: for when a man thus ſecretly relies on his own wiſdom, he is ready to imbibe all thoſe hereſies, which, as a great army, ſurround the church and nation, and draw away the ſoul from the ſimplicity of the goſpel. This farther opens a way for the enemy, who ſoon overcomes him with the temptation to place his affections on carnal objects, and thereby entices him to commit thoſe ſins which many moral perſons would bluſh at. Moreover, the ungodly and the reprobate are emboldened, by the trips and falls of profeſſors, to harden themſelves in impiety and unbelief, as though there were neither God nor devil, heaven nor hell. Thus through a backſliding heart the earth is filled with horrid blaſ-

blaſphemies and reproaches againſt the adorable Jehovah! I fear, this is the character of too many in the preſent day; and if ſo, we need not be at a loſs to diſcover why the Almighty hath ſent the deſtroying angel to brandiſh his glittering ſword over and puniſh our ſin-abounding land.

Now, my dear reader, from a review of this ſhameful departure from the Lord, what know you of your own heart? Do you feel and lament the loathſome nature of that myſtery of iniquity which is lodged therein? And do you continually come to, and enjoy an intercourſe with, that Jeſus in whom alone the church is complete? Do you plead with the Spirit to glorify Jeſus in your body and ſoul, which are his? Do you attend upon goſpel ordinances, as means of deriving out of the fulneſs of Jeſus to your empty ſoul? In ſhort, are you convinced, that no one can poſſibly quicken or keep alive his own ſoul? And do you live upon Chriſt, who is a fountain of light, life, and joy to his people? If not, you certainly muſt in ſome degree anſwer the character that has been ſet before you. O that God, by the power of his Spirit, may break forth into your ſoul, that you may ſee and feel your folly and miſery, and return unto the

the Lord! for remember, the Lord ſays of all his people, he formed them for himſelf, and that they ſhall ſhew forth his praiſe. And if you or I take a view of our own ſouls, as ſunk into ſloth and carnality, we muſt either conclude we are not his people, or are foully backſlidden from him. And if we are not his people, and have only intruded into the church, how great is our danger! Let me forewarn you, my fellow-ſinner, and may the Spirit rouſe your ſleepy ſoul! A ſtorm ſeems near, the clouds have already gathered blackneſs; and if his anger is poured forth, who ſhall ſtand? where can you find ſhelter? Unleſs Chriſt convert your ſinful heart, you will fly from your profeſſion, and turn back again to your former luſts, to fill up the meaſure of your iniquity, and at laſt receive a dreadful portion in the lake that burneth with unquenchable fire! But, O that God may enable you to take this warning, that you may flee for ſhelter under his wings, and be preſerved for evermore!

Remember likewiſe, reader, if you are one of thoſe who have experienced the love of Chriſt in their hearts, and, being now backſlidden from him, are content to continue in the chair of ſloth; God will viſit your tranſgreſſions with a rod, and your iniquities with ſtripes, and then

then you will return with weeping and ſuppli-
cation unto the Lord your God. And as many
children, on the ſight of the correcting rod,
humble themſelves, and obey the voice and
will of their parents; ſo may you, by behold-
ing with contrition your own departure from
the path of duty, and the Lord's judgments
which are abroad in the earth, haſten to the
arms of that Jeſus who receives returning ſouls
with tenderneſs and love. And for this bleſſed
end, may the Holy Spirit ſanctify theſe lines
to your ſoul, that you may enjoy inward
peace by the blood of the croſs, and triumph
therein both in proſperity and adverſity. Thus
prays

Your well-wiſher in Chriſt,

July 14, 1779.

AMICUS.

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